

Undercount for Those Experiencing Homelessness

Wed 9/30/2020 11:38 AM

Good morning,

I am requesting anonymity out of fear of retaliation as I have a current EEO case open for disability discrimination and sexual harrassment.

I am a former Census Field Manager who oversaw the Group Quarters Operation for the part of the county I live in which includes SBE, Service Based Enumeration. I am extremely concerned that many of the most vulnerable in our communities will not only be undercounted, but funding for various service based organizations will be either severely cut short or eliminated all together based on the inaccurate data compiled during the SBE operation. We are in unprecedented times and have the opportunity to gather complete and accurate information including the impact this pandemic will have made on our country for the next ten years. We do need more time however, which has been cut short by close to a month even after reasonable updates had been made to the operational timeline. If we do not obtain accurate data now, our communities and service based organizations will surely suffer harsh consequences in the years leading up to the next Decennial Census. Please see the below concerns:

- During the ETL (Early Transitory Locations) operation there were several hotels and motels under a program called Project Roomkey in our state to temporarily house those experiencing homelessness in order to curb exposure to COVID. Many of those hotels and motels were not enumerated under the correct operation, which should have been SBE. Project Roomkey is expected to end next month and I am concerned that not only were those experiencing homelessness counted under the wrong operation which could affect funding allocated for future emergency shelter programs under service based organizations, but that those experiencing homelessness may end up again without shelter. I do not feel that the SBE operation successfully obtained an accurate enough count for not only our states, but other states as well. a
- The timeframe to research and add additional service based organizations to the workload was cut short as well as the time to canvass for areas where those experiencing homelessness may be temporarily living outdoors. Compared to the data in 2010 which did include the canvassing of those experiencing homelessness during the actual enumeration day, our county alone had a decrease by close to 85% of locations. Due to the timeline being cut short and the directive not to canvass during enumeration night, it was not possible to obtain anything close to complete data. There was also insufficient training for enumerators and many that were recruited dropped out at the last minute due to staff not being upfront about the

nature of the enumeration of the outdoor locations of those experiencing homelessness.

- During the timeframe that those experiencing homelessness were to be counted, a directive was given not to canvass additional locations while enumerating which goes against what the instructions have been set out from HQ Census office in Washington. Our county alone has a very high homeless rate which includes veterans, families with children and those with mental health issues. With layoffs and school closings from the pandemic and most recently evacuations from the fires, I am concerned that more people will start falling into this category of homelessness. We need accurate data to come up with long term solutions to an expanding issue.

I understand that we are in the middle of a pandemic, however we have shown enough tenacity to get us to 98% response rate. That other 2% could mean nothing for one county or state, but could mean loss of funding to another that will last them the next 10 years. It could also mean that 2% includes those experiencing homelessness. We need as much of an accurate count as possible so that our harder to count communities are not faced with an even bigger burden in the future. I am hoping that additional time is given and also a request to recount for the SBE operation.

Thank you for your time